

# COMMUNITIES-ON-TAP

## TOURISM ACTION PLAN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME TWO

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### MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



**I**t is my pleasure to introduce the fourth "Communities On TAP" Newsletter.

These newsletters are intended to keep communities up-to-date on methods and resources for dealing with issues arising from their Community Tourism Action Plans. Additionally, the newsletters are published so that communities can develop a network of contacts throughout the province — contacts to which they can turn for advice and information when developing their own local tourism industry.

This edition of "Communities On TAP" focuses on the development of Tourism Action Plans by rural communities.

As a category, a rural community is considered to be any county, municipal district, improvement district, special area, Indian Band or Metis Settlement.

A number of rural communities mistakenly believe that tourism cannot benefit them. In fact, tourism offers a great deal to rural communities — benefits my staff have extensively researched.

If your community has yet to commence work on its Tourism Action Plan, it's time to take the initiative. Approach your community council or administration and determine if a Plan is in the works. If not, suggest that a Tourism Action Committee be formed by advertising for volunteers in your local newspaper.

When forming your Tourism Action Committee, keep in mind that it is best if at least 75 per cent of your committee members are either in private business, directly working in the tourism industry, or are members of not-for-profit groups that have a product to offer tourists. Historical societies and service clubs that put on annual events or tournaments are good examples of not-for-profit organizations that can provide valuable input to your Tourism Action Plan.

An increasing number of Alberta communities are becoming involved in the Community Tourism Action Plan program. As of November 24, 1989, **88.5 per cent** of the **427** eligible communities were involved in the program.

I extend congratulations to each of these forward-looking communities, **185** of which have had their Plans endorsed by their elected officials and registered with Alberta Tourism. These communities are now eligible to use their funding allocation to implement the capital development projects contained in their Plans.

Yours sincerely,

**Don Sparrow**  
**Minister of Tourism**

### COMMUNITY TOURISM ACTION PLANS BENEFIT RURAL COMMUNITIES

**I**n Alberta, planned tourism development is helping to build and diversify a growing number of local economies. In fact, many rural communities have already assessed, or are now examining, their own potential for tourism development. Furthermore, in many communities, planned tourism strategies are already in action.



Anyone involved with local Community Tourism Action Planning will tell you that being involved at this level of our tourism industry is truly exciting. Take advantage of your opportunity to participate in the excitement. Help build a solid foundation for tourism in Alberta. Planned tourism development promises economic and social benefits for every rural Albertan.

Rural destinations offer the unique combination of natural settings and warm hospitality. Country vacations, bed and breakfast homes, private campgrounds, trail riding, photo safaris, farm tours, hunting and guiding are but a few of the special services tourists attracted to our great outdoors look for in a holiday destination. Even those visiting friends and relatives use many rural businesses, such as the local service station, grocery store and laundromat. And, of course, every visitor purchase benefits the local economy.

By the year 2000, tourism revenues in the province will reach \$10 - billion and the industry will employ over 200,000 Albertans. Rural communities that plan for the future will be big winners. Many are already enjoying new economic benefits.

A number of rural communities have found that completing a Tourism Action Plan is a great way to secure support for tourism development from local business operators and individual residents. Also, an approved Plan is the first step in obtaining financial support from Alberta Tourism's Community Tourism Action Program (CTAP). Local businesses, potential investors, and the municipality which commits funds for tourism development may qualify for matching funding under this program.

As more tourists patronize retail and service establishments in the rural communities they visit, more money is available to operators for improving their product

lines, operations, facilities and quality of service. As a result, local residents enjoy greater variety and quality of services and, potentially, more and better jobs for their families. Increased employment results in an improved standard of living, strengthened community pride and greater social well-being for the community.

To learn more about the many opportunities for rural tourism growth contact the Tourism Development Network at:

Community Services Branch  
Planning Division  
Alberta Tourism  
5th Floor  
10155 - 102 Street  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T5J 4L6  
Telephone: (403) 427-2501



## WAYS TO DEVELOP A RURAL TOURISM ACTION PLAN

**W**ith a rural Tourism Action Plan, it is much easier to determine what opportunities exist and where resources can best be used. Moreover, a Tourism Action Plan helps you set goals and identify the action steps to take towards tourism

success. Consequently, a good Plan is the key element in obtaining financial support.

A number of ways to develop a rural Tourism Action Plan exist:

### **Do Your Own Plan**

You know your own community

best. Just living in the area day-by-day makes you an expert about which aspects are fun, historical, cultural or unique. Therefore, by developing a Plan, your community can focus this expertise on its specific requirements and apply funding to local projects.



The first step is to organize a local group of tourism supporters and form a Tourism Action Committee. A Tourism Action Committee generally is comprised of ten to fifteen members. A mix of business and interested residents makes for a well-balanced, well-thought-out Plan. These ten to fifteen residents are directly exposed to the benefits of the tourism industry. In turn, they spread the good news throughout your community.

Keep as flexible as possible in your planning. Then, after developing your Plan, if you see opportunities to work in co-operation with adjacent communities, most of the necessary groundwork will have already been done.

### **Join An Area Tourism Action Committee**

On the other hand, you may be invited to assign a representative(s) to an established Area Tourism Action Committee consisting of urban communities contained within your boundaries. Carefully consider this alternative.

A co-operative Plan requires less commitment of resources (time, people) by an individual community. In addition, it is often in the interests of several communities to upgrade, protect and promote rural tourism attractions such as historical sites and hunting areas.

For example, rural attractions are often just as important to adjacent urban centres as they are to your rural community. Therefore, by joining with several urban communities, a number of mutually agreeable objectives and projects can be determined, resulting in a more balanced Plan. Also, by working together, urban and rural groups build mutual co-operation and trust, as well as improving community relations.

A drawback to this approach is that you may find yourself involved in a very urban-oriented Plan in which rural tourism

opportunities do not receive the attention or priority you feel they deserve. In addition, area Plans tend to result in relatively general objectives which may not be related specifically to local projects. To qualify for funding under the Community Tourism Action Program your specific community and project must be mentioned in the Area Tourism Action Plan.

Finally, as area Plans require fewer local people to plan and implement, your community may be less involved and less enthusiastic about tourism industry growth. As a rule local residents have a greater interest in Plans that deal directly with their community.

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### **Formally Endorse One Or More Urban Plans**

You can formally endorse the completed Tourism Action Plan of one or more urban centres located within your rural area by following an alternative procedure. This procedure, noted in points one through three in the next column, is an effective method if your community wants to minimize its participation in tourism planning and is of the opinion that existing urban Plans in your municipality already address your needs.

If you like this option, keep in mind that the direction of your tourism industry will, in large part, be determined by the urban communities. These

communities may or may not have considered rural tourism opportunities in the development of their Tourism Action Plans.

A potential for conflict exists in rushing to formally endorse an individual urban Plan. At a later date, other urban centres in the rural area may develop Tourism Action Plans. These Plans could identify new opportunities that have not been addressed in the Plan that the rural community has already endorsed.

In order to alleviate these concerns, the rural council should appoint a Rural Tourism Action Committee. This Committee will perform the following duties:

1. The Rural Tourism Action Committee will be responsible for amalgamating the urban Tourism Action Plans and organizing them so that they reflect the priorities of that rural area.
2. The Committee will ensure that rural residents have the opportunity to comment and add to the Plan where necessary. This will be accomplished through the scheduling and advertising of one or more public meetings.

If the case arises where there is little or no interest in the development of a Rural Tourism Action Committee, the rural council could formally function as the Committee, and obtain public input as an agenda item on one of their regularly scheduled council meetings.

3. The Committee will be responsible for obtaining formal endorsement from the rural council before forwarding the Plan to Alberta Tourism for registration.

### **Funding Implications**

The rural council will ensure that the rural community's priority interests are being served. They may choose to do this by appointing the Rural Tourism Action Committee to review all applications requesting funds



from the rural community's funding allocation. Because the rural community has adopted the contents of another urban Plan, the Committee, in conjunction with the rural council, would determine how Community Tourism Action Program funds will be allocated to applications received.

### **Which Planning Option Is Best?**

Alberta Tourism recommends that you complete your own Tourism Action Plan. This approach allows you to directly and realistically address the tourism potential of your own

area. You gain a greater level of commitment from your own community, while retaining control over elements of the Plan which will affect your lifestyles.

This, of course, does not mean that urban and rural communities should not subsequently join forces to develop a regional Plan. It is only after each community has completed its own local Plan that common regional objectives can surface. When a number of common regional objectives appear in the majority of local Plans in a given area, the communities involved

should contact Alberta Tourism for assistance in developing a Regional Tourism Action Plan.

Remember that the objective of the Community Tourism Action Plan is to achieve comprehensive tourism development. While tourism facility funding is important and will help turn your capital development projects into reality, your Plan must also address other key issues, such as tourism promotion, training and awareness.

## **DO SUMMER VILLAGES COUNT?**



**B**ecause of the nature of summer villages, a strategic Tourism Action Plan may be necessary to direct the development of an already growing tourism industry.

In some instances however, summer villages are very small and it may be unrealistic for them to independently prepare their own Tourism Action Plan. In these cases, there is great value in the summer village undertaking a joint Plan with the

rural community which contains them.

The planning process encourages "brainstorming" to generate tourism development ideas. These ideas are later evaluated for feasibility, priority and cost-effectiveness.

Consequently, by having one or two representatives on a Rural Community Tourism Action Committee, a summer village can ensure that some of their projects are included in the Plan.

Specifically, listing one or two capital development projects keeps the door open to access Community Tourism Action Program funds for those projects.

Upon completion, the Tourism Action Plan submitted to Alberta Tourism must be formally endorsed by the rural municipality and the summer village council.

**Alberta**  
TOURISM